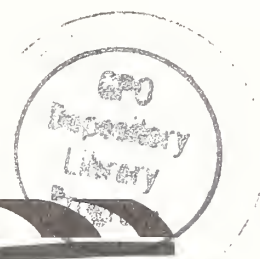


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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2656

April 1, 1994

FIELD OFFICE STUDY -- USDA field offices of the future are being examined at focus group studies in eight states. The effort is providing USDA information about improving customer service and determining technology requirements for field offices. The focus groups are meeting in California, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, and Vermont. The meetings are taking place through April 15. Four focus groups are formed at each location and represent current USDA customers, potential customers, agriculture support groups, and front-line USDA employees. **Contact: Karren Alenier (202) 720-5865.**

VOMITOXIN TESTING -- USDA will begin vomitoxin testing of grain on a permanent basis beginning April 23. USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service had been testing for vomitoxin on a request basis. The change is in response to the widespread occurrence of scab damage in last year's wheat crop and to the market's need for rapid onsite testing capabilities. **Contact: Dana Stewart (202) 720-5091.**

CO-OP'S SHARE -- Cooperative's share of total farm marketings has leveled off in the last 11 years, while their share of major farm production expenditures is slowly increasing. Cooperatives marketed farm commodities totaling a record \$58.2 billion in 1992, but their share of the market remained at 27 percent for the third year. The largest single item of sales for cooperatives is milk, totaling \$20 billion, 34 percent of all commodity marketings. There is increasing interest among cooperatives in boosting exports. Congressional approval of NAFTA, and recent GATT agreements can open the way to correcting the imbalance between domestic demand and the large supplies available. **Contact: Carolyn Liebrand (202) 690-1414.**

TOP EXPORT MARKETS -- Japan was the leading market for United States agricultural exports last year in both value and share. Ag exports to Japan totaled \$8.4 billion, and represented 20 percent of total agricultural exports. The nations of the European Union received \$7 billion in U.S. exports, representing 16 percent of the U.S. export market. Canada was third with \$5.2 billion and a 12 percent share. Exports to Japan and Canada reached record highs. **Contact: Tom Warden (202) 219-0822.**

EMERGENCY LOANS -- More specialists are being sent to flood states in the Midwest to help process emergency farm loans. USDA has sent 100 additional loan specialists from the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to assist producers and help ensure proper distribution of the loans. FmHA administrator Michael Dunn says the additional help is necessary because the next few weeks are critical in terms of financing this year's crop production. The action is part of the commitment to help overcome the impact of the flooding on the farm community. The loan specialists are equipped with laptop computers designed to help determine loan qualification. The computer system cuts the time of the qualification process from two hours to 20 minutes. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

HELPING BEGINNING FARMERS -- The reluctance of private lenders to lend to beginning farmers, combined with rapidly aging farm populations, have prompted the creation of programs to provide affordable financing to beginning farmers. States may now finance equity capital requirements for beginning farmers through low cost and low risk options. The Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1993 makes permanent the tax exempt status of states' "aggie bonds." Applicants can borrow up to \$200,000. The Agricultural Credit Improvement Act authorizes the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to establish a partnership with states for loans up to \$250,000 to beginning farmers. FmHA has also established the Down Payment Farm Ownership and the Special Operating Loan programs that cover 30 percent of farmland purchase at a below-market interest rate. **Contact: Audrae Erickson (202) 219-0892.**

IMPROVING KENAF -- USDA scientists have identified a variety of kenaf that has yields three times normal, and tolerates root-feeding nematodes. The nematodes are kenaf's major pest problem. During three years of tests in nematode infested fields, the SF459 variety averaged 8,450 pounds of fiber per acre, compared to 2,800 pounds from the standard variety. Nematodes feed on the test variety, but the plant has resistance to disease-causing fungi introduced by the pests. A commercial variety of nematode-tolerant kenaf will be available within a year. Kenaf is used in the manufacture of many products, including paper, garden potting mix, oil spill cleanup, and lawn seed mats. **Contact: Charles Cook (210) 969-4812.**

TIDY TREES -- Warmer weather prompts removing from the lawn winter's tree debris, and removing damaged tree limbs. When branches are pruned the branch collar should not be removed. Don't flush-cut against the trunk and don't paint the wound. Allow young trees to develop good leaf crowns before pruning. The best time to water landscape trees is at night from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. **Contact: Dan Rahn (912) 681-5189.**

HOW SWEET IT IS -- Research shows that Aspartame, now the leading high-intensity sweetener, is 200 times as sweet as sugar. Only small amounts are needed to achieve a sweetening effect equivalent to much larger amounts of sugar. It provides 4 calories per gram. Aspartame gradually loses its sweetness in liquids as a function of time and temperature. Its largest use is in diet soft drinks. Saccharin is 300 times sweeter than sugar. Saccharin is not metabolized, therefore it has no calories. Saccharin is the second most widely used high-intensity sweetener. Acesulfame-K, called Ace-K, is 200 times sweeter than sugar, has no calories, and is stable at cooking temperatures. It is usually used in chewing gum, puddings and imitation dairy products. Aspartame, saccharin, and ace-K are approved for use by the Food and Drug Administration. Pending FDA approval are sucralose and alitame. If these new high-intensity sweeteners are approved they could be used as a direct sugar substitute. **Peter Bussanell (202) 219-0888.**

STOKE THE FIRE -- A low calorie diet is a good way to achieve a healthy weight, but as in many other things it's not best when dieting becomes extreme. Chronic dieting, under-eating, or skipping meals can contribute to a sluggish metabolism, which can make it harder to lose weight. Fueling metabolism is like stoking a fire, if the wood is removed the fire will diminish. To fuel metabolism, a sufficient amount of calories must be consumed or the body will slow down to compensate. Proper dieting requires following the recommended daily allowances of the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. **Contact: Carol Suter (409) 845-2798.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

WEEKLY CASSETTE:

AGRICULTURE USA #1921 -- West Virginia is home to strip mines that have been returned to a state of beauty. **Patrick O'Leary** reports on a strip mine reclaiming program called RAMP. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1403 -- Bloomin' bushes; the case for cabbage; safe food labels; specialty coffees; Homocysteine and vascular disease. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1913 -- Rising interest rates?; nervously watching oats decline; U.S. farmers facing more competition; honey bees and mites; pesky ground squirrels. (Weekly reel of features.)

ON THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE:

Tuesday, April 12, crop production report, world ag supply & demand, weekly weather and crop situation; Wednesday, April 13, hog outlook, cotton and wool update, world ag production, world grain situation & outlook, world oilseed situation & outlook, world cotton situation, world tobacco situation; Thursday, April 14, feed update, oil crops update; Friday, April 15, milk production report. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359
COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the latest weather and crop conditions; FmHA deputy administrator **Wayne Fawbush** on additional loan specialists to help process applications in Midwest flood states; USDA program manager **Debra Bowling** on studying customer needs to design USDA field offices of the future; and USDA economist **Dennis Shields** on the outlook for fruit.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on new cotton products; and **Lynn Wyvill** reports on recommendations for food safety regarding cutting boards.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT; Saturdays 10:00 a.m., EDT; Mondays 8:00 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

AN INDICATOR...that spring has arrived is tractors in the field. **Everett Griner** (Southeast Agrinet, Moultrie, GA) says corn planting is underway, and peanut planting will begin in mid-April. Everett says weather has been ideal for getting the peach crop to a good start. During the winter growers received the required amount of cold weather, trees and buds made it through the frost season without being bitten, and there is good ground moisture. If the remainder of the growing season is as good as the beginning there could be an excellent crop of peaches in the southeast.

70 MPH WINDS...have been hitting sections of the Great Plains causing soil loss, says **Bruce Gaarder** (KNEB, Scottsbluff, NE). In between wind storms producers are getting field work accomplished. Some producers have already put beets in the ground. Of concern is the low level of snowpack in the mountains. It could cause problems this summer.

FILLING IN...is **Curtis Lackey** (KOLT, Scottsbluff, NE) until a full-time farm broadcaster is hired to replace **Howard Hale** who has left the station.

Farm Broadcasters Letter



Office of Communications
Room 528A
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1340

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FIELD WORK...is underway and some corn has been planted, says **Rita Frazer** (WSMI, Litchfield, IL). Rita says National Agriculture Day was a hit in her area. Local commodity groups donated products which were given away to listeners answering trivia questions.

NAFB...Northeast Region vice president **Pat Driscoll** (Michigan Farm Radio Network, Lansing) has distributed the mailing announcing the May 13-15 meeting in Traverse City at Sugarloaf Resort on Lake Michigan. Agriculture is second only to automotive production in the state, and a number of options are available to attendees that demonstrate the variety of production in Michigan.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Rick Haines** (Northern Ag Network, Billings, MT). Rick recently received the Media Award of the Montana Grain Growers Association. Rick was cited for his outstanding coverage of wheat industry issues.

VIC POWELL
Office of Communications